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SUBJECT: CANADA STILL MULLING ARF DISASTER RELIEF EXERCISE
PARTICIPATION

REF: STATE 122937

¶1. (SBU) According to Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) Asia Pacific security policy advisor Jean-Francois Lacasse, Canada is still consulting internally on how it can best match its interest in participating in the May 2009 Asean Regional Forum disaster relief exercise with Canada's "scarce operational resources."

Lacasse said Department of National Defence (DND) colleagues are still deciding whether it is operationally possible for Canadian forces to participate in the Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR) and, if so, what types of skills they could bring to the exercise. Lacasse noted that DND colleagues tell him the "intense" pre-planning exercises, outlined in reftel, also factor into their calculations of the resources implications of participation. Lacasse added that DFAIT disaster relief division director Leslie Norton and the Canadian defence attache in Jakarta will attend the December 4-6 ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Disaster Relief in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and both will be available for further discussions at that time. Lacasse reiterated Canada's interest in the VDR, but regretted that Canada may be limited to an observer status given the intense operational tempo of Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff made contact with the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa, which was unaware of the VDR and had no instructions for making representations to Canada. Post will nonetheless continue to coordinate with the Philippine Embassy in seeking to secure Canadian participation in the VDR.

¶3. (SBU) ARF point of contact in Ottawa is PolMilOff Brett Mattei (alternate: Deputy Pol/C Kurt Vander Walde).

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